

## **NUCLEAR THREATS: WHY THREATENING THE APOCALYPSE WILL NOT BENEFIT RUSSIA**

Written by John Hallam

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**ATTN VLADIMIR PUTIN, NIKOLAI PATRUSHEV, SERGEY LAVROV, DMITRI MEDVEDEV**

**Dear Vladimir Putin, Nikolai Patrushev, Sergey Lavrov, and Dmitri Medvedev:**

I am writing concerning remarks made by Vladimir Putin to the Russian parliament in the last few days.

<http://www.en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/73585>

I understand that quotes meant in one context may be taken out of context and misrepresented. However, the quotes below do seem to fit a pattern of threats of nuclear weapons use that are of course, illegal under international law.

In addition, recent meetings of the G20 and the G7 have said that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is illegal. Your foreign minister Sergei Lavrov will have assented to this language in the G20 meetings.

Use or threat of use of nuclear weapons would be illegal if the US or

NATO were to do it (as in the past they have done).

They would be illegal if Russia uses or threatens the use of, nuclear weapons.

In Putins address to the Russian Federal Assembly he states that:

"There has been talk about the possibility of sending NATO military contingents to Ukraine ... the consequences for possible interventionists will be ... tragic."

"We also have weapons that can hit targets on their territory. All this really threatens a conflict with the use of nuclear weapons and the destruction of civilisation. Don't they get that?"

A global conflict involving the use of Russia's (and the US's) nuclear arsenals would indeed, be more than 'tragic'.

It would result in the deaths of most humans over the following 10 years, with 'prompt' fatalities in the billions and a lingering demise for most others including in nations that have had nothing to do with the conflict and have not been targeted, in the freezing twilight of global nuclear winter.

I understand that Russia has a policy that one can 'escalate to de-escalate', i.e. that a nuclear threat, or actual use of nuclear weapons, could be used to 'soberise' an opponent.

Russia is not the only Government to have thought that way at times.

However, in simulation after simulation, war-game after war-game, things do not work out that way.

Instead, what happens is an escalatory tit for tat in which the ante inches inexorably – and in some simulations races rather than inches – upward to a global nuclear exchange of core nuclear arsenals led by land-based ICBM forces (because vulnerable to attack), that essentially wipes out the contending parties as functioning societies.

Far from 'soberising' your opponents, nuclear threats, or a nuclear 'shot across the bows' is likely to induce *them* to attempt to 'soberise' Russia, perhaps with a pre-emptive strike.

Just as when two individuals are in an argument that has gone over the top, a slap on the face intended to 'soberise' is as likely to lead to a retaliatory (and much harder) slap, that then escalates possibly to grave injury or to murder/manslaughter.

The way to 'soberise' is to take the temperature down, not up.

I am not suggesting that NATO has been perfect over the last decades. NATO did expand radically after promising not to do so. Arguably this shouldn't have taken place, though it has to be said that Poland and the Baltics were impelled by a wish to guarantee their own security against yourselves.

Once again, threatening may bring the opposite results to those sought. A Government that is threatened especially a smaller one, is likely to see its salvation in joining the very organisation you wish to prevent it from joining. Attempts to stop someone joining NATO will be the very thing that guarantees they join it.

I'm sure you will say that by saying what you said, you are merely issuing a 'warning' to the west and to NATO.

Such warnings have a way of bringing about precisely the result they purportedly seek to avoid. Warnings of nuclear war may (most likely, will) be interpreted as threats or blackmail, and lead not to a 'soberising' but to the judgement that ones interlocutor has taken leave of his senses and must be stopped by any means available including counter-threats or pre-emptive strikes.

Were NATO or the US making similar threats, believe me I would be writing to them in the same way! (and it was US senator Strom Thurmond who initiated the tradition of policymakers saying that 'the righteous will be raptured to heaven'. I note that Russia has now followed him up. For Thurmond the 'righteous' were US citizens. For you they are Russians.

I suggest that anyone who initiates a nuclear war is not righteous, and will rather be bound for the other, less desirable, post-mortem destination.

The consequences of an actual, full-scale nuclear war for Russia will be as cataclysmic as they will be for the US and NATO. Russia will cease to exist, as will the US and NATO. The overwhelming majority of populations of Russia, China (if involved), all of NATO including the US and other US allies (Japan, Australia) will likely die in the first terrible 90 minutes.

The ensuing nuclear winter (really a freezing global twilight) will cause

the death by starvation of most of the rest of the worlds population.

No possible, rational, geopolitical strategy by Russia (or anyone else) will be served by this. You have said in the past that without Russia there is no need for a world. There won't be a Russia (or a USA or a NATO for that matter). There will be some crippled starving fragments existing in the post apocalyptic twilight, maybe in Africa, maybe in South America, maybe in Oceania.

Your own lives will probably be finished. In any case even if you survive in some remote nuclear bunker, there won't be anything to come out to.

Continuance of these nuclear threats only makes it *more* not less likely that they will indeed come to pass, and yet actioning those threats serves no rational purpose whatsoever unless suicide serves a purpose.

And far from 'soberising' anyone, threats (of any kind nuclear or conventional) are always most likely to bring about precisely the result you seek to avoid.

Just as threatening military action if someone joins NATO is most likely going to ensure positively that they join NATO.

Putins speech to the Federal Assembly contained not only nuclear threats toward NATO, but many elements of a positive domestic agenda, ranging from the improvement of teachers salaries to the upgrading of public transport and further development of BAM.

These are the kind of initiatives that will improve Russia's standing in the world: The creation of a thriving, prosperous, just, and visibly desirable society within Russia that others will wish to imitate. Threats of any kind will do the opposite.

Russia and Ukraine should immediately institute a stable and lasting ceasefire, and commence open-ended negotiations with absolutely no preconditions.

The first step in improving Russia's standing in the world and in improving its geopolitical situation would be for Russia to exit Ukraine yesterday.

And to focus, consciously and persistently on the creation of a Russia that others will want to be, not a Russia that others will want to avoid.

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